

A Study of Nominal and Verbal Inflections in English and Ikwerre Languages

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Abstract

This paper examines and contrasts the nominal and verbal inflections in English and Ikwerre languages with the aim of identifying the areas of differences and similarities between the nominal and verbal inflectional systems of both languages. This study adopts the contrastive Analysis theory as its theoretical framework as well as the qualitative descriptive design with a content analysis approach. The data are collected directly from native speakers of Ikwerre language. The study reveals that while English nouns are inflected using the suffixes – ‘-s’ and ‘-es’ to mark number, Ikwerre nouns are inflected using the prefix – ‘ele-’ to mark same; English nouns are inflected with apostrophe and ‘s’ (’s) for singular and only apostrophe (’) for plural to mark possession, while in Ikwerre, possession is marked by placing the possession before the possessor; while English verbs are inflected to mark past tense and past participle using the suffixes – ‘-ed’ and ‘-en’ respectively, Ikwerre verbs are inflected with the suffix – ‘-le’ to mark both tenses; while verbs in English are inflected using ‘-ing’ to mark progression, Ikwerre verbs are inflected using the suffix ‘-lagu’ and the infix ‘-guru-’ to mark same. Notwithstanding, both languages mark past tense, past participle and progression by inflecting their verbs using suffixes. The study provides insights into the differences in the nominal and verbal inflectional systems of the English and Ikwerre languages. These differences pose challenges to Ikwerre learners of English as second language. It therefore, recommends that Ikwerre learners of English should be careful to note these differences in the morphemes and inflectional systems of the languages in order to enhance their acquisition of English as their second language (L2).

Keywords: Nominal, Verbal, Inflection, Tense, Second Language Learners

Introduction

Language is a structured system of communication that consists of grammar and vocabulary. It is the primary means by which humans convey meaning, both in spoken and written forms, and may also be conveyed through sign languages. Languages vary in different ways including methods of configuring the vocabularies to convey information. Human languages exhibit a wide range of inflectional processes, marked by changes in the forms of words to indicate grammatical features

such as tense, number, gender and case. One fundamental distinction within this domain is between the nominal and verbal inflections which play crucial roles in marking syntactic and semantic relationships within sentences.

Inflection is a fundamental aspect of morphology which plays an important role in the grammatical structure of languages. Nominal and verbal inflections in languages can vary significantly, leading to differences in word formations and sentence structure. English and Ikwerre are two languages with distinct inflectional patterns, making them interesting subject for comparative analysis. By comparing the systems of nominal and verbal inflections in both languages, the differences and similarities in how they inflect nouns and verbs are uncovered. This paper therefore, examines and contrasts the inflectional systems of both languages with a view to identify the differences that may pose problems to the Ikwerre learners of English as a second language as well as the similarities that may enhance the teaching and learning of the target language.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Contrastive Analysis (CA)

Contrastive Analysis is referred to as contrastive linguistics. This is because it was majorly employed in the field of Applied Linguistics in the 1950s and 1970s. Ituen defines it as a ‘systematic descriptive analysis and comparison of specific linguistic characteristics of two or more languages’ (60). Historically, contrastive analysis was initiated by Charles Carpenter Fries (An American Linguist) in 1945. Fries is the first to compare two languages that are socio-culturally bound. He argued that the most effective materials in foreign language teaching, are those that are based on a scientific description of the language to be learned (L2), carefully compared with a parallel description of the language of the learner (L1) (19).

Subsequently, Lado in Adebileje (1) provided a comparative description of English and Spanish on the hypothesis that comparing the learner’s first language with the foreign language to be learnt can advance the teaching of the target foreign language.

Lado (in Agwu 123) postulated that those features of the second language, similar to the learner’s first language, will be easier to learn when compared to the features that are quite dissimilar to the learner’s first language. In other words, those features of the second language that are not similar to the features of the first language will be difficult for the second language learners to understand. This is attributed to the strangeness of the second language features to the learners.

Contrastive analysis therefore, was employed as a result of difficulties faced by foreign language learners which result from the strangeness of the features of the target foreign language. Contrastive analysis is a detailed comparison of two languages, with the aim of providing insight into their similarities and differences and to predict possible learning challenges encountered by foreign language learners. Hence, Crystal (in Agwu 123) defines contrastive analysis as ‘a systematic comparison of L1 and L2 in order to predict areas of learning difficulties’. This implies that when two languages are contrastively analysed, the differences and similarities between them are discovered.

The main aim of contrastive analysis is to assist in second language learning by comparing two languages, pointing out their similarities and differences and predicting possible learning challenges. Since there are varying methods of nominal and verbal inflections in English and Ikwerre languages, the understanding of these methods (reflecting on the similarities and differences between them) can equip Ikwerre learners of English as a second language, and thereby

aid effective learning of English language by them as they are armed with the different methods of inflecting nouns and verbs in both languages.

Conceptual Review

Nominals

Nominals are words that function as nouns in sentences. They can refer to people, places, things, ideas or emotions. Nwala & Nwala (59) define nominal as any word which is not a noun, but appears in the functional position of a noun. This implies that nominals are not just words which belong to nouns by classification, but every word that occupies the position of nouns and functions as nouns. Nominals are fundamental components of language that allows us refer to and talk about entities in the world. Noam Chomsky, in his seminar work, 'syntactic structure', discussed the concept of nominal as one of the fundamental building blocks of language. He argues that nominals serve as the referential core of a sentence, allowing speakers to identify and describe entities in the world. For example, in the sentence: 'The cat is sleeping', the nominal (the cat) refers to a specific entity, allowing the speaker to convey information about it.

John Lyons, a British linguist, defines nominal as 'a syntactic unit that functions as a noun, but not necessarily a single word. It is a constituent that refers to an entity, individual, or concept in the world' (347). Lyons' definition emphasizes a nominal as a unit of syntax. This means that it is a part of the structural organization of a sentence. It points out that a nominal must grammatically function as a noun, acting as a subject, object or complement. The definition also makes us know that nominals are not necessarily a single word. It can be a phrase or a group of words that functions as a unit, such as 'the man in the room', or 'the Nye-wne-eli of Rumuekpne'. Finally, in the definition, Lyons opines that nominal denotes something in the world, whether concrete or abstract.

Summarily, nominals play crucial roles in the structure of sentences. Nominals can be single words or phrases that function as single units in sentences. Nominals are not necessarily nouns but perhaps, words from other word classes functioning as nouns in sentences. Examples of nominals in sentences are as follows;

Smoking is dangerous to health (verb functioning as a noun).

The wicked shall not see God (adjective functioning as a noun).

To forgive is divine (infinitive performing the role of a noun).

That Joseph finally married Mary is surprising (a clause functioning as a noun).

Verbal's

Verbal, according to Geoffrey Leech, is defined as a word derived from a verb, but functions as a different part of speech, such as noun, adjective or adverb (185). This definition shows a transformation of verbs into other word classes, and there is a functional shift of verb forms to other grammatical categories. It also points out that verbals are verb based, and function as nouns, adjectives or adverbs. For example, gerunds, infinitives, and participles are verbals. Gerunds are verbs ending with -ing- and function as nouns.

Examples of gerunds include:

- Singing - singing is a vocation.
- Dancing - Dancing is a good exercise for healthy living.
- Writing - Writing is my hobby.

Infinitives are basic form of verbs, without an inflection binding it to a particular subject or tense (wikipedia). Two types of infinitives that function as nouns are 'to infinitives and 'ing infinitives' (Nwala & Nwala 60).

Examples of infinitives functioning as nouns are:

- To forgive is divine (To infinitives used as a noun).
- Studying syntax requires courage (-ing infinitives functioning as noun).

Participles are verb based, but function as adjectives. For example, 'broken' which is a participle of 'break' functions as an adjective in the sentence that follows. 'She has a broken pen'. Other examples are 'spoken word', 'written agreement', 'torn clothe'.

However, Noam Chomsky defines verbal as a lexical item that functions as a verb, but may also appear in non-verbal context such as nominal or adjectival positions. In this definition, Chomsky opines that the item termed verbal, functions as a verb; and may also appear in non-verbal context. This gives room for it to function as other word class or grammatical categories. This study adopts Chomsky definition of verbals.

Inflection

Inflection comes from a latin word – 'inflectere' which means to bend. To bend a word entail altering the form of that word. When the form of a word has been altered, a new variety is formed. Hence, crystal sees inflection as 'a process of word formation (243). Inflection is therefore the change of forms that words undergo to express some grammatical functions such as case, gender, number, tense, person, etc. Inflection of English verbs is called conjugation while inflection on other words classes is called declension. Words are inflected in two ways – either by the addition of letter(s) to the base word or vowel alternation. The letters added to inflect English words are referred to as inflectional affixes. Inflectional affixes/morphemes are not full-fledged words and therefore cannot stand alone, but must be attached to a larger grammatical unit. Their meanings are only realized when affixed to words. They are:

Plural marker (-s, -es): boy – boys, box – boxes.

Possessive marker (-'s, -'): This is a pupil's bag, these are pupils's bag.

Concord marker (-s): He comes here every day.

Past tense marker (-ed): wash – washed.

Progressive marker (-ing): He is sleeping.

Comparative marker (-er): Short – shorter.

Superlative marker (-est): High – highest.

Past participle marker (-en): Eat – eaten.

Words are also inflected by alternating the vowels in them. Examples, teach – taught, man – men, tooth – teeth.

Nominal Inflection in English Language

Nominals in English language are inflected to perform different grammatical functions. This is done with the use of the inflectional morphemes. One can therefore say, that English nouns are inflected to mark number and possession. To mark number, English nouns are inflected by adding the plural marker (-s, -es) to the singular nouns. For example: boy – boys, girl – girls, adult – adults, box – boxes, dress – dresses. English nouns are also inflected by the alternation of vowels as in tooth – teeth, goose – geese. To mark possession, English nouns are inflected using the possessive markers (-'s, -'). Apostrophe and 's' ('s) is added to singular nouns to mark possession

(e.g, girl's bag, man's shoes) while only apostrophe is added to plural nouns to mark same (e.g, girls' bags, teachers' house).

Nominal inflection in Ikwerre Language

Nouns in Ikwerre language are inflected to mark both number and possession. In order to mark number, the prefix, 'ele-' is added to the singular nouns in place of 'ne' which is a singular marker.

For example:

Nerukna – boy

Elerukna – boys

Neriyina – girl

Eleriyina – girls

Neoknei – adult

Eleoknei – adults

Ne-ernu – worker

Ele-ernu – workers

Neohia – hunter

Eleohia – hunters

Ikwerre nouns also mark plural using the lexicon, 'otuturu' which is a quantifier, meaning many.

For example:

Ize – tooth

Otuturu ize – teeth

Iwo – dress

Otuturu iwo – dresses

Ochi – leg

Otuturu ochi – legs/feet

Oknuknu – box

Otuturu oknuknu – boxes

Nouns in Ikwerre language mark possession through syntactic mechanism. The possession is placed before the possessor. For instance:

Rekpa neriyina – Girl's bag

(Bag Girl)

Oro Victor – Victor's house

(House Victor)

Rekpa eleriyina – Girls' bags

(Bag Girls)

Oro ele-ozinhe – Teachers' house

(House Teachers)

Okpu neokaiwu – Lawyer's wig

(Wig Lawyer)

Verbal Inflection in English Language

English verbs are inflected to mark tenses such as past tense, past participle and progression. To mark past tense, the verbs are inflected by adding the suffix, '-ed' to the base verb. For instance, wash – washed; cook – cooked; walk – walked; pray – prayed. Past tense can also be marked by vowel alternation as in fall – fell; know – knew; sing – sang. English verbs are inflected to mark past participle by the use of the suffix, '-en'. For example, let us consider the sentences below:

He has brokenu his leg.

Peter has spokenu well.

They have givenu money.

To mark progression, the English verbs are inflected by adding ‘-ing’ to the main verb. For example:

He is sleepingu.

She was sleepingu.

They were cookingu.

Verbal Inflection in Ikwerre Language

Ikwerre verbs are inflected to mark past tense, past participle and progression. To mark past tense, the verbs are inflected by adding the suffix, ‘-le’ to the base verbs. For example:

Snu (wash) – Snuleu (washed)

Shi (cook) – Shile (cooked)

Dna (fall) – Dnaleu (fell)

To mark past participle, the verbs are inflected by the addition of the suffix, ‘-le’ to the verbs as seen in the sentences that follow:

O gbazileu ochi a.

He/She has broken his/her leg.

Ve galeu awai.

They have given money.

O dnaleu

He has fallen

In marking progression, Ikwerre verbs are inflected by adding the suffix, ‘-lagu’ to them as seen in the following sentences.

O snilagu iynoro.

He is sleeping.

Ben snelagu isne.

Ben is walking.

O rilagu wiri

She is eating.

The above examples mark present progression. To mark past progression, the auxiliary verb is inflected using the infix ‘-guru-’ as exemplified below:

O ziguruno ogba otna.

He was wrestling.

Mary ziguruno osni iynoro.

Mary was sleeping.

Uche ziguruno otne eri.

Uche was dancing.

Empirical Review

Agwu and Amadi contrastively analysed the concept of demonstratives in English and Ikwerre languages in the year 2024. They examined the intricate syntactic and morphological dynamics of demonstratives in the languages (ie English and Ikwerre languages), as well as the variations and parallels in how demonstratives are used in the said languages. This could pose challenges to Ikwerre speakers learning English as a second language. The study revealed that Ikwerre

demonstratives serve determiners, adjectives and possession markers in a manner comparable to that of English. This study centres on demonstratives in English and Ikwerre languages while the present study centers on the nominal and verbal inflections in the same languages.

Agwu did a contrastive study of the progressive maker in English and Ikwerre languages in the year 2024. She examined the differences that exist in the progressive markers in the two languages. This is done with the aim to curb the learning difficulties that Ikwerre learners of English language are exposed to, due to the differences in the progressive markers of the languages. This study revealed that, in the English language, the progressive verb form is marked with the ‘-ing’ suffix whereas the ‘-ga’ suffix is used to mark the progressive verb form in the Ikwerre language. The study further revealed that the present progressive verb form is marked with the auxiliary verb (be), main verb and the ‘-ing’ marker in the English language while in the Ikwerre language, the present progressive form is marked with the ‘ga’ suffix. It is also revealed that while English forms its past progressive forms with the past form of the auxiliary verb (be), the main verb, and the ‘ing’ marker, the Ikwerre language forms its past progressive with the presence of the suffix ‘ga’ followed by the factive rV suffix. The study focuses on only the progressive maker while the current work is more encompassing.

Alerechi worked on ‘A Contrastive Study of Sentence types in Ikwerre (Omuanwa) and English in the year 1987. The study is a comprehensive research paper that delves into the sentence structures of Ikwerre, a Nigerian language, and English. The study aims to identify and compare the similarities and differences in sentence types between the two languages. The paper begins by introducing the Ikwerre language, its dialects and its linguistic significance. Alerechi then provided an overview of the sentence types in English, categorizing them into simple, compound and complex sentences. The core of the study focuses on the contrastive analysis of sentence types in Ikwerre and English. Alerechi identifies four main sentence types in Ikwerre: simple, compound, complex and compound complex sentences. She then compares these with their English counterparts, highlighting the similarities and differences.

One significant finding is that Ikwerre has a more complex sentence structure than English, with a greater use of subordinate clauses and relative pronouns. Additionally, Ikwerre exhibits a unique sentence type, the ‘Serial contracture’, which is not found in English. The study also explores the implications of these differences for language teaching and learning. Alerechi suggest that English language instructors should be aware of the sentence structure differences between Ikwerre and English to better support Ikwerre-speaking learners. Summarily, Alerechi’s research provides valuable insights into the sentence types of Ikwerre and English, contributing to a deeper understanding of linguistic diversity and language acquisition. The study’s findings have practical application for language teaching, learning and translation, making it a significant contribution to the field of linguistics. Alerechi’s study is on sentence types while the present study is on nominal and verbal inflection.

In the year, 2007, Alerechi did ‘A Dialect Survey of Ikwerre: A phonological perspective’ which explores the phonological variations among the dialects of the Ikwerre language, spoken in Nigeria. The research aims to identify and analyze the phonological features that distinguish the different dialects of Ikwerre. The study begins with an introduction of the Ikwerre language, its speakers, and the research methodology employed. Alerechi then provided a thorough review of the phonological structure of Ikwerre, including its sound system, syllable structure and intonation patterns. The core of the study presents the results of the dialect survey, which involved collecting and analyzing speech data from speakers of different Ikwerre dialects. Alerechi identifies several phonological features that vary across the dialects, including:

- i. Vowel harmony: differences in vowel pronunciation and harmony patterns.
- ii. Consonant variation: differences in consonant pronunciation and distribution.
- iii. Tone: differences in tone patterns and their phonological functions.

The study reveals that Ikwerre dialects can be grouped into three main clusters based on their phonological features: the central, Eastern, and western dialects. Alerechi also discusses the implications of these findings for language classification, language teaching and language documentation. Strengths of the study include: comprehensive coverage of Ikwerre phonology, systematic and rigorous methodology, and clear and detailed presentation of results. While one of the weaknesses is that she limited the scope of the study, focusing on phonology alone. However, Alerechi's research provides a significant contribution to the study of Ikwerre language and linguistics, shedding light on the phonological diversity of the language. While Alerechi's work focuses on the phonological perspective of Ikwerre language, the current work focuses on nominal and verbal inflection in Ikwerre, contrasting it with what is obtainable in English.

Azunda carried out a research on 'A contrastive study of Affirmation and Negation in Ikwerre (Igwuruta) and English'. The research is a thought-provoking one that explores the similarities between Ikwerre, a Nigerian language, and English. The study begins with a comprehensive introduction to Ikwerre language, its dialects, and the research methodology employed. Azunda then delves into the contrastive analysis of affirmation and negation in both languages, providing numerous examples to illustrate the differences. Key findings of the study are that Ikwerre uses a unique affirmative marker which is not found in English; Ikwerre negation involves a combination of verbal and non-verbal morphemes, unlike English's reliance on 'not' and 'no', and Ikwerre exhibits a subject-verb-object-word order in affirmative sentences, but a subject-object-verb order in negative sentences. Azunda's research highlights the complexities of linguistic differences and their implication for language teaching, learning and translation. The study demonstrates a deep understanding of both languages and provides valuable insights for linguists, language instructors, and students. Azunda's research is a contrastive study of affirmation and negation in Ikwerre (Igwuruta) and English, while the present research is a contrastive analysis of nominal and verbal inflection in Ikwerre and English.

Ndimele did a research on 'Etche verb morphology' in the year 1987. The work is a comprehensive and insightful study of the verb morphology of the Etche language, a Nigerian language. Ndimele provided a detailed analysis of the structure and organization of Etche verbs, shedding light on the language's complex grammatical system. He begins by introducing the Etche language and its significance, setting the stage for an in-depth examination of its verb morphology. He then delves into the phonology and morphological characteristics of Etche verb including their root structure, prefixation, suffixation and tone patterns. One of the strengths of the study is the meticulous documentation of Etche verb forms, including their various tenses, aspects, and moods. Ndimele provides numerous examples to illustrate the complex verb conjugations, making the study an invaluable resource for linguists and language learners.

The study also explores the semantic and syntactic properties of Etche verbs, examining their relationships with other sentence constituents and their role in conveying meaning. Ndimele's analysis reveals the intricate patterns and regularities that underlie Etche verb morphology, demonstrating a deep understanding of the language's structure. Throughout the work, Ndimele engages with theoretical debates in linguistics, situating the study of Etche verb morphology within broader discussions of language typology and universals. His approach is rigorous and systematic, reflecting a commitment to empirical accuracy and theoretical clarity. While Ndimele's work is

on Etche verb morphology, the present work is a contrastive analysis of nominal and verbal inflection in English and Ikwerre.

Kari researched on 'The structure of the Degema Verb'. The study provided an in-depth analysis of the verb system of the Degema language, spoken in Nigeria. The research is a comprehensive study of the morphological and syntactic properties of Degema verbs, shedding light on the language's complex grammatical structure. Kari begins by introducing the Degema language and its linguistic significance, setting the stage for a detailed examination of its verb system. He then delves into the phonological and morphological characteristics of Degema verbs, including their root structure, prefixation, suffixation and tone pattern. The study explores the various verb forms in Degema, including tenses, aspects and moods, providing numerous examples to illustrate the complex conjugations. Kari's work is on the structure of the 'Degema Verb' while the current study is on 'A Contrastive Analysis of Nominal and Verbal Inflection in English and Ikwerre'.

Agwu did a study on 'The Pluralisation of Nouns in Ikwerre and its implication for the second language learner' in 2022. She adopted the contrastive analysis theory in her study. The study was on the hypothesis that the elements or features that are similar to the learner's mother tongue will be easily understood while the ones in opposition will pose some challenges. The aim of the study was to compare and contrast the two languages in terms of plural marking in order to predict and discover the challenges that learners of the second language may encounter in the process of acquisition. The findings of the study included that the process of marking plural in Ikwerre is quite different from English. For example, plural markers in Ikwerre are prefixes while in English, they are suffixes. Some cited plural markers in Ikwerre are 'ele' and 'nde' as plural of 'nye'. It also noted that the Ikwerre plural markers are free morphemes whereas, they are bound morphemes in English language. The study also revealed that Ikwerre plural nouns, do not show a distinct variance in the spellings of their singular forms but understood in context, while relative morpheme occur in both languages. The study suggested that there is likelihood of some difficulties that could be encountered by the Ikwerre learners of English since there are apparent differences between the plural formation of both languages.

Wayas and Usa did a study of the Tiv and English inflectional morphemes in 2021. The study examined the English inflectional morphology and the Tiv language in order to compare and contrast the morphosyntactic distributions in both languages. They adopted the contrastive and error analysis theory in the study. It was opined that the dissimilarities in the features of two languages (such as English and any native language) are likely to affect the acquisition of the target language. One of the findings of the study is that inflectional morphemes of the Tiv language can occur by the alternation in tone (e.g, the falling tone for the singular while the rising tone for the plural) with fusional quality. This is not the same in English. For example, Tiv plural marker has two formations of the phonological conditions depending on the variation in tone and pronunciation of the nouns. Whereas, the English plural morphemes are phonologically and morphologically conditioned (/s/ in casts, /z/ in dogs and /iz/ in boxes). Also, the English past tense morphemes are phonologically and morphologically conditioned (/ed/, /t/ and /id/), while the Tiv past tense markets are of four types but further classified into groups of phonological and morphological conditioning with suffix and affix in addition to the application of tones. The study focused on comparing and contrasting English and Tiv language in terms of inflectional morphemes while the present study focuses on comparing and contrasting English and Ikwerre based on nominal and verbal inflections.

Adejare, in 2019, studied the acquisition and usage of '-s plural' morphemes using fifteen (15) third - year English education students of the Lagos State University. The study identifies the English's

plural' morphemes as one of the most difficult grammatical morphemes to be used and acquired by second language learner. It also discovered that Nigerian languages are not marked for number the same way English language does. This results from the general absence of plural inflection. Adejare combined the contrastive Analysis, the Error Analysis, the Failed functional features hypothesis theories in the study. The last two theories are based on the fact that Nigeria second language learners have challenges with English inflection due to its absence in their first language. The study advocated for a better and more robust theory for second language acquisition as unified by Afolayan in 1985 (419).

Christian analyzed the mother tongue interference in Nigeria secondary school students' written English in 2017. The study emphasized the role of English language as an official language in Nigeria and the importance of mother tongue in the acquisition of a foreign language. Using the contrastive and error analysis theories, the study examined the grammatical and structural difference between English and Yoruba and their influence on the students' performance in their English. It pointed out that errors are unavoidable in second language learning as advanced learners of a foreign language are capable of being victims to errors. It noted that problems with mother tongue interference are not limited to students only but also to professionals in many disciplines in Nigeria.

One hundred (100) senior students of both private and public secondary schools of the south western Nigeria, were used to obtain data for the study. The students were asked to write a composition on the topic: 'A story I will never forget '. The outcome showed that the interference of Yoruba was slight as the intraluminal errors overshadowed the interlingual errors. The errors identified were in the grammatical aspects such as articles, prepositions, plurals, nouns, verbs, pronouns, subject verb agreement, spellings and lexical substitution (45). The study opined that the effect of a mother tongue on the target language constitute a serious problem to language learners in their bid to acquire a new language. The study also explained some basic concept in language teaching and learning. The concepts include:

SLA - Second Language Acquisition

MTI - Mother Tongue Interference

CLI - Cross Linguistic Interference

PT - Positive Transfer

NT - Negative Transfer

The study also pointed out four aspects of plural marking in Yoruba language. Those aspects are:

- (I) Contextually marked category.
- (II) Semantically marked category.
- (iii) Morphologically determined category and.
- (iv) The copy modifier.

The study was concluded with a recommendation that teachers should be versed on second language acquisition theories as to be equipped to correct learners' error whenever they commit since errors are inevitable.

The study, 'A contrastive Analysis of English and Ikwerre Syllables Structure' was carried out by Onyedika, Ifeoma in 2015. The aim of the study was to examine the syllable structures of English and Ikwerre. The study revealed differences in the syllable structures of the two languages. For instance, English syllables are made of a consonant followed by a vowel, whereas, Ikwerre syllables allow for more complex structures with consonant clusters and complex vowel combination. The study also identified that Ikwerre syllables are more symmetrical in terms of onset and coda consonants in comparison to English. The study also identified similarity in syllable

structures of the two languages. For instance, both languages have restrictions on certain consonant clusters in syllables, additionally, the study highlighted templates in Ikwerre that predict the permissible structures in the language. In summary, the study provides valuable insight into the syllable structures of English and Ikwerre, shedding light on the differences and similarities between the two languages. It offers a comprehensive contrastive analysis that can be useful for language learners and linguists interested in the phonology of these languages.

Ozo-Mekuro Ndimele published a study on 'English and Ikwerre Verbal Aspect: A Contrastive Analysis' in 1999. The study is a comprehensive exploration of the verbal aspect system in English and Ikwerre. The study aimed at highlighting the similarities and differences in the verbal aspect of the two languages. The study provided a detailed overview of the concept of verbal aspect and its importance in language. The author explained that the verbal aspect refers to the way in which an action is viewed or understood in relation to time duration and completion. In English, verbal aspect is primarily expressed through the use of auxiliary verbs forms like the present progressive (I am eating) and the past perfect (I had eaten). In Ikwerre, verbal aspect is conveyed through a variety of morphological markers attached to the verb stem. The study revealed some differences between English and Ikwerre in terms of verbal aspect. For instance, English employs a system of auxiliary verbs to express aspectual distinction, while Ikwerre relies on inflectional markers attached directly to the verb stem. Additionally, Ikwerre exhibits a greater degree of complexity in its verbal aspect system, with various morphological markers indicating different aspects such as completion, repetition and habitual action. While Ndimele's work on verbal aspect, the current work is on nominal and verbal inflection.

A contrastive Analysis of English and Ikwerre Sentence Structure is a comprehensive study by Dr. Ngozi Oditia in 2016. The study examined the structural differences between English and Ikwerre. The study provided valuable insights into the linguistic features of both languages. The findings of the study revealed several interesting contrasts between English and Ikwerre sentence structure. One of the key differences highlighted is the word order in sentences. While English follows subject-verb-object (SVO) word order, Ikwerre follows subject-object-verb (SOV) word order. This difference in word order has significant implications for sentence construction and understanding in both languages.

The study also explored syntactic properties such as tense, mood, and negation in English and Ikwerre sentences. The analysis showed that while English has a complex system of verb inflections to indicate tense, aspect and mood, Ikwerre relies more on auxiliary verbs and particles to convey similar meanings. This difference in syntactic properties further underscores the unique structural characteristics of each language. Finally, the study examined the use of pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions in both languages and highlighted how these linguistic elements contribute to sentence cohesion and coherence. The analysis revealed that while English has wide range of pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions, Ikwerre has more limited set of these elements, which may influence the overall complexity of sentence structure. While Oditia's study dwelt on sentence structure of English and Ikwerre, the present study is focusing on the nominal and verbal inflection in English and Ikwerre.

Summary of Nominal and Verbal Inflectional Systems of English and Ikwerre Languages

Type of Inflection	English	Ikwerre
Nominal marking number.	1. Addition of the suffixes ‘-s’ e.g, boys ‘-es’ e.g., benches. 2. Alternation of vowels e.g, foot – feet.	1. Attachment of the prefix, ‘ ele ’ e.g., ele-rukna (boys). 2. The use of the lexicon, ‘ otuturu ’ e.g., otuturu ochi (feet/legs).
Nominal marking possession.	3. The use of an apostrophe (’) e.g., girls’ bag. 4. The use of an apostrophe and s (’s) e.g., girl’s dress.	3. Placement of the possession before the possessor e.g., rekpa ele-riyna.
Verbal marking past tense.	5. The use of the suffix ‘-ed’ e.g., washed.	4. The use of the suffix ‘ le ’ e.g., snule.
Verbal marking past participle.	6. The use of the ‘ en ’ suffix e.g., Peter has spoken well.	5. The use of the ‘-le’ suffix. E.g., Peter kwule koma.
Verbal marking progression.	7. Inflecting the base verb with ‘ ing ’. E.g., she is eating, they are cooking.	6. The use of the auxiliary verb, ‘ zino ’ e.g., O zino sni iynoro. 7. The use of the suffix ‘-lagu’ e.g., O snilagu iynoro. 8. The use of the infix, ‘-guru’ inserted in the auxiliary verb ‘ zino ’. E.g., O ziguruno osni iynoro.

Contrastive Analysis of the Nominal and Verbal Inflectional Systems of English and Ikwerre Languages

1. English nouns are inflected with suffixes to mark plural while Ikwerre nouns are inflected with prefixes to mark same as shown in the table below.

English Language		Ikwerre Language	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Boy	Boys	Ne-rukna	<u>Ele</u> -rukna
Girl	Girls	Ne-riyna	<u>Ele</u> -riyna
Adult	Adults	Ne-oknei	<u>Ele</u> -oknei
Worker	Workers	Ne-ernu	<u>Ele</u> -ernu
Hunter	Hunters	Ne-ohia	<u>Ele</u> -ohia
Trader	Traders	Ne-ahia	<u>Ele</u> -ahia
Father	Fathers	Nda	<u>Ele</u> -nda
Mother	Mothers	Nna	<u>Ele</u> -nna

The nouns are also inflected using ‘-es’ and vowel alternation to mark plural while Ikwerre use the lexicon, ‘otuturu’ to mark plural as seen below.

English Language		Ikwerre Language	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Box	<u>Boxes</u>	Oknuknu	Otuturu oknuknu
Dress	<u>Dresses</u>	Iwo	Otuturu iwo
Tooth	<u>Teeth</u>	Ize	Otuturu ize
Foot	<u>Feet</u>	Ochi	Otuturu ochi

2. English nouns are inflected to mark possession by adding apostrophe and 's' ('s) (for singular) and only apostrophe (') (for plural) on the possessor which comes before the possession while Ikwerre nouns mark possession without apostrophe but by placing the possession before the possessor. Example;

English Language	Ikwerre Language
Girl's bag – singular	Rekpa ne-riyna – singular
Girls' bag – plural	Rekpa ele-riyna – plural
Lawyer's wig – singular	Okpu ne-okaiwu – singular
Lawyers' wig – plural	Okpu ele-okaiwu – plural
Teacher's house – singular	Oro ne-ozinhe – singular
Teachers' house – plural	Oro ele-ozinhe – plural

3. English verbs are inflected to mark past tense by the addition of the suffix '-ed' to the base verb while Ikwerre verbs are inflected with the suffix '-le' to mark same as seen in the table below.

English Language		Ikwerre Language	
Present Tense	Past Tense	Present Tense	Past Tense
Wash	<u>Washed</u>	Snu	<u>Snule</u>
Walk	<u>Walked</u>	Sne	<u>Snele</u>
Pray	<u>Prayed</u>	Kpe	<u>Kpele</u>
Cook	<u>Cooked</u>	Shi	<u>Shile</u>
Pick	<u>Picked</u>	Tutu	<u>Tutule</u>
Kill	<u>Killed</u>	Gbu	<u>Gbule</u>

4. English verbs mark past participle by inflecting the verbs with the suffix '-en' while Ikwerre verbs are inflected with '-le' to mark same as exemplified in the table that follows.

English Language	Ikwerre Language
He has <u>broken</u> his leg.	O gbazile ochi a.
John has <u>spoken</u> well.	John kwule koma.
They have <u>given</u> money.	Ve gale awai.
Dimkpa has <u>chosen</u> his wife.	Dimkpa whowhurule nwnere a.

5. English verbs mark progression (both present and past progression) using the '-ing' while Ikwerre verbs mark present progression by adding '-lagu' to the verb, and marks past progression by the addition of an infix on the auxiliary verb. For example:

English Language	Ikwerre Language
Present Progression He is sleeping. Ben is walking. Precious is dancing. She is eating.	Present Progression O snilagu iynoro. Ben snelagu isne. Precious tnelagu eri. O rilagu wiring.
Past Progression She was sleeping. They were cooking. Uche was dancing. Richard was wrestling.	Past Progression O ziguruno osni iynoro. Ve ziguruno oshi wiri. Uche ziguruno otne eri. Richard ziguruno ogna otna.

Conclusion

This study has presented a comparison of the nominal and verbal inflectional systems of English and Ikwerre languages in order to bring to fore, the areas of differences and similarities in the nominal and verbal inflectional systems of the languages. The study reveals that: while English nouns are inflected to mark number by using the suffixes '-s' and '-es', Ikwerre nouns are inflected using the prefix 'ele-' to mark number; while English nouns are inflected with apostrophe and 's' ('s) (for singular nouns) and only apostrophe (') (for plural nouns) to mark possession, Ikwerre places the possession before the possessor to mark same; while English verbs are inflected to mark past tense and past participle using '-ed' and '-en' respectively, Ikwerre verbs are inflected using the suffix, '-le' to mark both past and participle; while English verbs are inflected using '-ing' to mark progression, Ikwerre verbs mark same using the suffix '-lagu' and the infix '-guru-'. However, it also reveals that both languages inflect their verbs to mark past tense, past participle and progression using suffixes.

The study reveals outstanding differences in the nominal and verbal inflectional systems of both languages as seen in the preceding paragraph. These differences pose great challenges to Ikwerre learners of English language as a second language. It therefore, recommends that: Ikwerre learners of English as second language (L2) should make conscious efforts to note the differences in the nominal and verbal inflectional systems of both languages; those who teach English to Ikwerre learners should have the knowledge of their (Ikwerre learners') first language inflectional system to enable them (the teachers) guide the learners appropriately; there should be comparative study of other areas of Ikwerre and English languages to create awareness of the differences and similarities in those areas to Ikwerre learners, to equip them adequately in their study of English as a second language.

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